

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel, without prejudice, claims 47, 52, 69, 89, 93-96, 98-103, 105/108.

Please amend the claims below as indicated:

44. (Amended) A method of connecting two parties in real time, the method comprising:
providing a list of information providers, the list including an indication of a current
availability status and a price for each information provider; and,
in response to a user selecting an information provider from the list, establishing a real
time voice communication connection between the information provider and the user.

45. (Amended) The method as described in claim 44, further comprising, after
establishing the real time voice communication connection between the information provider and
the user, changing the indication of the current availability status for the information provider.

46. (Amended) The method as described in claim 44, further comprising, after the real
time voice communication connection has ended, prompting the user to evaluate the information
provider.

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48. (Amended) The method as described in claim [47] 44, wherein the price includes a
rate per period of time.

1 49. The method as described in claim 44, wherein the list includes a user evaluation
2 rating.

1 50. The method as described in claim 44, wherein the list is provided in response to a
2 keyword search.

1 51. The method as described in claim 44, wherein the list is provided in response to a
2 category selection.

1 52. (Deleted)

1 53. The method as described in claim 44, wherein the real time communication
2 connection includes a telephone connection.

1 54. (Amended) The method as described in claim 53, wherein the information provider
2 and the user each have a telephone number, and the real time voice communication connection is
3 established without disclosing the telephone number of the information provider to the user and
4 without disclosing the telephone number of the user to the information provider.

1 55. (Amended) The method as described in claim 44, further comprising, tracking how
2 long the real time voice communication connection is maintained between the information
3 provider and the user.

1 56. (Amended) The method as described in claim 55, further comprising, billing the user
2 based upon how long the real time voice communication connection is maintained.

1 57. (Amended) The method as described in claim 55, further comprising:
2 before providing the list, setting up an account for the information provider; and
3 crediting the account for an amount based upon how long the real time voice
4 communication connection is maintained.

1 58. (Amended) The method as described in claim 55, further comprising:
2 before providing the list, setting up an account for the information provider; and
3 crediting the account for an amount based upon how long the real time voice
4 communication connection is maintained minus a fee.

1 59. The method as described in claim 44, further comprising, before providing the list,
2 setting up a user account for the user.

1 60. The method as described in claim 59, wherein setting up the user account includes
2 obtaining credit card information from the user.

1 61. (Amended) The method as described in claim 59, further comprising:
2 tracking how long the real time voice communication connection is maintained between
3 the information provider and the user; and,

4 while the real time voice communication connection is being maintained, notifying the
5 user in real time of a balance in the user account.

1 62. (Amended) The method as described in claim 59, further comprising:
2 tracking how long the real time voice communication connection is maintained between
3 the information provider and the user; and
4 deducting from the user account an amount based upon how long the real time voice
5 communication connection is maintained.

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1 63. (Amended) A system for connecting two parties in real time, the system comprising:
2 a communications interface; and
3 a controller computer being linked with the communications interface, the controller
4 computer having:
5 a database to store information about a plurality of information providers;
6 a first logic unit linked with the database to provide a list of information providers
7 to a user, the list including an indication of a current availability status for each
8 information provider; and
9 a second logic unit linked with the database to establish, in response to the user
10 selecting an information provider from the list and via the communications interface, a
11 real time voice communication connection between the user and the information
12 provider.

1 64. (Amended) The system as described in claim 63, wherein the controller computer has
2 a third logic unit to prompt the user to provide an evaluation of the information provider after the
3 information provider and the user the real time voice communication connection has ended.

1 65. The system as described in claim 64, wherein the evaluation is stored on the database.

1 66. The system as described in claim 63, wherein the first logic unit provides the list of
2 information providers in response to a keyword search.

1 67. The system as described in claim 63, wherein the first logic unit provides the list of
2 information providers in response to a category selection.

1 68. (Amended) The system as described in claim 63, wherein the second logic unit
2 changes the indication of the current availability status for the information provider after the real
3 time voice communication connection between the user and the information provider has been
4 established.

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1 70. The system as described in claim 63, wherein the second logic unit establishes a
2 telephone connection between the user and the information provider.

1 71. The system as described in claim 70, wherein the information provider and the user
2 each have a telephone number, and the second logic unit establishes the telephone connection
3 without disclosing the telephone number of the information provider to the user and without
4 disclosing the telephone number of the user to the information provider.

1 72. (Amended) The system as described in claim 63, wherein the controller computer has
2 a third logic unit to track how long the real time voice communication connection is maintained
3 between the user and the information provider.

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B 1 73. (Amended) The system as described in claim 72, wherein the controller computer has
2 a fourth logic unit to bill the user based upon how long the real time voice communication
3 connection is maintained.

1 74. (Amended) The system as described in claim 72, wherein the database further stores
2 information about an account set up for the information provider, and the controller computer
3 has a fourth logic unit linked with the database to credit the account for an amount based upon
4 how long the real time voice communication connection is maintained.

1 75. (Amended) The system as described in claim 72, wherein the database further stores
2 information about an account set up for the information provider, and the controller computer
3 has a fourth logic unit linked with the database to credit the account for an amount based upon
4 how long the real time voice communication connection is maintained minus a fee.

1 76. The system as described in claim 63, wherein the database stores information about
2 a user account set up for the user.

1 77. The system as described in claim 76, wherein the information about the user account
2 includes credit card information obtained from the user.

1 78. (Amended) The system as described in claim 76, wherein the controller computer
2 has:

3 a third logic unit to track how long the real time voice communication connection is
4 maintained between the user and the information provider; and

5 a fourth logic unit linked with the database to notify the user in real time of a balance in
6 the user account.

1 79. (Amended) The system as described in claim 76, wherein the controller computer
2 has:

3 a third logic unit to track how long the real time voice communication connection is
4 maintained between the user and the information provider; and

5 a fourth logic unit linked with the database to deduct from the user account an amount
6 based upon how long the real time communication connection is maintained.

1 80. (Amended) A computer-readable medium having stored thereon instructions which,
2 when executed by a computer, cause the computer to:

3 provide a list of information providers, the list including an indication of a current
4 ~~availability status for each information provider; and,~~

5 in response to a user selecting an information provider from the list, establish a real time
6 voice communication connection between the information provider and the user.

1 81. (Amended) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 80, having stored
2 thereon instructions that further cause the computer to change the indication of the current
3 availability status for the information provider after the real time voice communication
4 connection is established.

1 82. The computer-readable medium as described in claim 80, having stored thereon
2 instructions that further cause the computer to prompt the user to evaluate the information
3 provider after the information provider has finished communicating with the user.

1 83. (Amended) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 80, having stored
2 thereon instructions that further cause the computer to track how long the real time voice
3 communication connection is maintained between the information provider and the user.

1 84. (Amended) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 83, having stored
2 thereon instructions that further cause the computer to bill the user based upon how long the [real
3 time voice communication connection is maintained.

1 85. (Amended) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 83, having stored
2 thereon instructions that further cause the computer to:
3 set up a user account for the user; and
4 notify the user in real time of a balance in the user account while the real time voice
5 communication connection is being maintained.

1 86. (Amended) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 83, having stored
2 thereon instructions that further cause the computer to:
3 set up a user account for the user; and
4 deduct from the user account an amount based upon how long the real time voice
5 communication connection is maintained.

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1 87. (Amended) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 83, having stored
2 thereon instructions that further cause the computer to:
3 set-up an account for the information provider; and
4 credit the account for an amount based upon how long the real time voice communication
5 connection is maintained.

1 88. (Amended) The computer-readable medium as described in claim 83, having stored
2 thereon instructions that further cause the computer to:
3 set-up an account for the information provider; and
4 credit the account for an amount based upon how long the real time voice communication
5 connection is maintained minus a fee.

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1 90. The computer-readable medium as described in claim [83] 80, wherein the
2 instructions stored thereon cause the computer to establish a telephone connection in response to
3 the user selecting the information provider.

1 91. The computer-readable medium as described in claim 90, wherein the information
2 provider and the user each have a telephone number, and instructions stored on the computer-
3 readable medium cause the computer to establish the telephone connection without disclosing the
4 telephone number of the information provider to the user and without disclosing the telephone
5 number of the user to the information provider.

1 92. (Amended) [A] The method [of providing a connection between a user and an
2 information provider, the method comprising] as described in claim 53, wherein establishing the
3 telephone connection comprises:

4 [in response to the user selecting the information provider,] establishing [contact] a first
5 telephone link with the information provider;

6 [contacting] establishing a second telephone link with the user after [contact with the
7 information provider] the first telephone link has been established; and

8 connecting [the user and the information provider] the first and the second telephone
9 links to establish the telephone connection between [enable] the user and the information
10 provider [to communicate in real time].

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1 97. (Amended) [A]The system as described in claim 70 [for providing a connection
2 between a user and an information provider, the system comprising]wherein the second logic
3 unit further comprises:

4 [a communications interface; and

5 a controller computer linked with the communications interface, the controller computer

6 having:]

7 a first logic sub-unit to establish [contact]a first telephone link with the
8 information provider via the communications interface [in response to the user selecting
9 the information provider];

10 a second logic sub-unit to [contact]establish a second telephone link with the user
11 via the communications interface after the [contact]first telephone link with the
12 information provider has been established; and

13 a third logic sub-unit to connect the [user and the information provider to]the first
14 and second telephone links to establish the telephone connection between [enable] the
15 user and the information provider [~~to~~ communicate in real time].

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1 104. (Amend) [A]The computer-readable medium [having stored thereon instructions
2 which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to]as described in claim 90, having
3 stored thereon instructions to cause the computer to establish the telephone connection by:
4 [in response to a user selecting an information provider,]establishing [contact]a first
5 telephone link with the information provider;
6 [contacting]establishing a second telephone link with the user after [contact with the
7 information provider]the first telephone link has been established; and

8 [establishing a connection]connecting the first and the second telephone link to establish
9 the telephone connection between the user and the information provider [to enables the user and
10 the information provider to communicate in real time].

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